

TEACHING AND LEARNING WORLD GEOGRAPHY

AN OVERVIEW OF THE TEKS: GETTING REAQUAINTED WITH AN OLD FRIEND

Introduction:

The purpose of this section of the workshop is to (re) introduce World Geography Studies teachers to the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) and ways the TEKS are assessed. This one-hour activity provides the opportunity to learn about the structure of the 1998-approved Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) for World Geography (Course 113.34), and the patterns and processes that define the content and skills of those World Geography TEKS.

All teaching and learning of World Geography in the state of Texas should be based on the 1998-approved TEKS for World Geography, Course 113.34. Thus, any and all activities in a **Teaching and Learning World Geography (TALWG)** workshop session or professional development presentation *must* begin with the World Geography TEKS in mind. It is recommended that all TALWG sessions should include a reflection on the ways the World Geography TEKS are addressed and to what degree.

Background:

Since 2001, when the state-mandated Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) “kicked in,” pun intended, all 9th through 11th grade Social Studies teachers have become *de facto* U.S. History teachers. This is because 9th and 10th grade Social Studies teachers are required to prepare students for the 8th grade early American History content that was included in the 10th grade assessment by legislative mandate. So, in addition to teaching the required TEKS for either World Geography or World History, teachers have had to also re-teach Early US History. Additionally, opportunities to introduce post-Reconstruction Era U.S. History at 10th grade were not shunned, but rather encouraged and applauded. The worst thing that could have happened to teaching solid world geography via the state-mandated World Geography TEKS was the state-mandated TAKS. Period.

Changes in assessment are coming! TAKS will be replaced by three End-of-Course (EOC) Exams, including one in World Geography--and none too soon. By the time the majority of 9th or 10th graders in 2011-2012 take the World Geography course and subsequently the World Geography EOC Exam as part of their new state-mandated graduation requirements, a solid decade of TAKS-driven US History in lieu of TEKS-driven World Geography will have put a tremendous dent in teacher preparedness and delivery of instruction of world geography. In essence, any teacher that was new to teaching World Geography between 2001 and 2011 will still be *new* at *really* teaching World Geography in 2011. We have a lot of work to do. Let it begin. Amen.

Time:

50 minutes plus time for debriefing

Materials:

Handout 1: a copy of the World Geography TEKS
Handout 2: TEKS Analysis Questions

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Handout 3: Newspaper Headlines & Geography
one hi-liter per participant
chart tablet paper or overhead transparencies
a variety of chart markers

Strategies for Workshop Training:

Beginning the Activity

1. Introduce this activity by giving a brief history of the development of the mandated TEKS as curriculum standards in 1998. Some material is provided in **Background**. Remind participants of the two-column structure of the TEKS and that the focus of instruction needs to be in the right-hand column:

Knowledge and Skills	Student Expectations
The student understands...	The student is expected to...

2. Hand out a copy of the World Geography TEKS to each participant.

3. Review the four paragraph introduction to the World Geography TEKS by reading, explaining, asking participants to follow along and hi-light key components. Elicit comments on ways the introduction informs the structure of the organization and intent of the TEKS:

- Paragraph 1 gives the *scope* of what is to be taught in the World Geography classroom;
- Paragraph 2 lists examples of the *variety of rich primary and secondary source material* that is *encouraged* to be used in the World Geography classroom;
- Paragraph 3 states that there are *eight strands* that are used to organize the *essential knowledge and skills* for social studies, and these should be integrated for instructional purposes; furthermore, *content* and *skills* should be taught together; and,
- Paragraph 4 does two important things:
 - a.) it lists the all-important strands for the first time [history; geography; economics; government; citizenship; culture; science, technology, and society; and social studies skills], and
 - b.) it gives us the promise of what will be the end product [ideal student] when we do a good job K-12 of teaching Social Studies [see the last sentence for the three-pronged promise.]

Developing the Activity

4. Once you are satisfied that participants understand the introduction, divide them into eight groups. Assign each group a section of the TEKS per these suggestions.

- Group 1: History TEKS (1 and 2)
- Group 2: Geography TEKS (3, 4, 5, and 6)
- Group 3: Geography TEKS (7, 8, and 9)
- Group 4: Economics TEKS (10, 11, and 12)
- Group 5: Government and Citizenship TEKS (13, 14, and 15)

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- Group 6: Culture TEKS (16, 17, and 18)
Group 7: Science, Technology, and Society TEKS (19 and 20)
Group 8: Social Studies Skills (21, 22, and 23)

Distribute Handout 2 and ask participants to individually read and analyze the assigned TEKS, looking for answers to the questions listed below:

- What are some of the large overarching *themes* in the assigned TEKS?
- What are some of the *processes* and *patterns* explicitly stated in the assigned TEKS?
- What are some of the *skills* either additionally embedded or downright featured in the assigned TEKS [Group 8 will need to focus on this *only*]?

5. After about 10 minutes, ask each group to share their individual findings and to use a chart tablet page and chart markers or markers and overhead transparencies to make a visual representation of the *themes*, *processes* and *patterns*, and *skills* they discovered when analyzing their assigned TEKS. They will be expected to share their poster/overhead with the entire workshop group. As they create the poster, instruct participants to plan how they will communicate their key ideas in 2 minutes or less.

6. Ask each group to share their visual representation of the *themes*, *processes* and *patterns*, and *skills* they discovered when analyzing their assigned TEKS in two minutes or less.

7. Distribute Handout 3, Newspaper Headlines and Geography, to each group and ask each group to share how their assigned strand and TEKS connects to the headline(s) used. Take about 10 minutes. Allow for some discussion of how multiple strands and multiple TEKS might connect to headline(s) now-assigned to a single strand in prior activity.

(NOTE: IF prior activity * *Why Is Geography Important?* was not done/delivered here immediately prior to this TEKS introduction activity for whatever reason, please refer to that activity in the workshop materials to ensure that said headlines *are* used here - it is important that groups be given this initial opportunity to *apply* what they learned about the World Geography TEKS to something real and tangible like newspaper headlines.)

Concluding the Activity

8. Invest the last 5 minutes of the hour-long **Overview of the World Geography TEKS** activity to a debriefing time with the workshop participants. Ask them to reflect, discuss, and share their thoughts on the following:

- *How* did this activity help you get a better grasp as to the structure/organization and the content of the World Geography TEKS?
- *What else* do you believe you need at this time in order to get started teaching the World Geography TEKS the way they were obviously intended to be taught?
- *What improvement(s)* could be made to this Overview of the World Geography TEKS activity?

